1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FRS Nyoni FRS Mpezeni

Livingstone was the first Briton to reach this area. In 1866 he passed through what was to become Mpezeni's country,[1] and in his journals he makes frequent references to Ngoni raids. Unfortunately his carriers would not take him to Ngoni villages and all he saw of Ngoni activity were burnt-out huts and dead bodies killed in battle. The accounts of his journeys stimulated British interest in the region round Lake Nyasa, a centre for the slave trade, and led to the arrival there of missionaries and settlers. In 1874 the Livingstonia Mission was founded and in 1883 a British consul was first appointed to the Shire Highlands.[2]

Mpezeni's country lay some distance from the main centres of British and Portuguese activity, but was not without importance. Apart from Mlanje, it was thought that there were other gold deposits to be found in the area. In contrast with their hunted neighbours, the prosperous Ngoni with their herds of cattle attracted travellers while the pleasant climate of the plateau, compared with the hot valleys of Lourenço, Zambesi, and Nyasa, made it suitable for European colonization. Yet the Ngoni army was formidable, and had to be neutralized in some way if other settlements were to be safe. Mpezeni's country flanked several trade routes of importance from the Zambesi and Lake Nyasa inland to the sources of slaves and ivory. For these various reasons Mpezeni's country attracted the attention of traders and governments, those interested in benefiting by the slave trade as well as those seeking to end it. In addition towards the end of the century when it became clear that Africa was to be completely divided between the Powers, any territory, however inhospitable, that had not already been claimed attracted the attention of treaty-making explorers.

The first move towards incorporating the Fort Jameson Ngoni in a colonial empire was made by the Portuguese who had been stimulated by the increasing British interest in Nyasaland. In November 1888 the Governor-General of Moçambique instructed Wiese, a German[3] trader who had already made contact with Mpezeni, to lead an expedition to him. According to Johnston, Wiese and an associate were offered £2,000 to secure Mpezeni's submission to Portugal.[4] Wiese was well received and distributed flags to Mpezeni and his sons. The Portuguese regarded the

[1] *Last Journals*, I, p. 150.

[2] Johnston, *British Central Africa*, pp. 73-82.

[3] In *B.W.P.*, (Ngoni), 1st, p. 182, the Portuguese Foreign Minister describes Wiese as a Dutchman. This appears to be incorrect in the light of Wiese's contacts with the German Legation in Lisbon.

[4] Wiese, 'Expedição', p. 1155; *ibid.*, p. 12. (To save space, all public records will be identified by a serial number printed bold there, taken from the first column of the Bibliography, List G.)

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FRS Ngoni FRS

1

Ngoniland and the People who lived in it

The homeland

The little country of Nyasaland in Central Africa received its name from the lake by which Livingstone and those who followed him penetrated into the interior and reached the lands and people living round the lake. On the west side there is a narrow strip of low-lying coastal land. Then a series of escarpments begin, and up them roads and paths wind through steep wooded valleys, until the final steep leads to the grasslands of the high plateaux. Here on the high plateaux the Ngoni settled about the middle of the nineteenth century, after nearly forty years of trekking from Natal to Tanganyika. They turned south again at the shores of Lake Victoria and returned to this land which they had passed through on their northward march. This high plateau has great diversity of scenery, and much of it reminded the Ngoni of the hills and valleys and grasslands of Natal. There are high mountains with sharp peaks and massive granite shoulders. Between the ranges of lower grass-covered hills are shallow valleys where the rain washes down good soil to the valley bottoms. Sweeps of grassland, leave of trees, alternate with river valleys where there is a continuous flow of water, fed by springs and mountain streams.

In the dry season, from April to November, the trees lose their leaves and the grass gradually dries up till the prevailing colours are gold and brown against the black and grey

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

sticky outcrops. In September, several weeks before the rains begin, the trees burst out into red foliage, making scarlet rings and patches around the mountains and along the valleys, while through the hard-baked earth spring gladioli and orchids. This is the time of the bush fires when grass is burned and men and boys go hunting. The first rain storms bring a transformation. Fresh green grass covers the land, and scarlet leaves turn bright green on bushes and trees, and later marigolds turn the hillsides golden and yellow aroma and red-hot pokers appear along the roadsides.

In making this high plateau their home, the Ngoni chose it primarily for the pasture lands for their cattle. They sited their villages on the ridges or the slopes of the hills, where they had a commanding position, with access to water, good land for cultivation in the shallow dips and river valleys, and woodlands where they could cut poles for their houses and cattle kraals.

The traditional Ngoni village was built in a horse shoe formation round a circular cattle kraal. Larger villages had a central kraal with huts round it, and several other kraals each with its horseshoe grouping of huts. A large village, and there were many of over a hundred huts, seemed at first sight to be a sprawling collection of huts and kraals, with a few tall trees about and several red ant-hills. A pattern of huts also became apparent, however, once the family and kinship grouping was known. Behind each hut was one or more circular grain stores built on platforms, large ones for maize and smaller ones for millet or ground-nuts. In the Central Ngoni kingdom, and sometimes in the Northern kingdom, there were tall reed fences round the huts of leading families, enclosing an open space where household work went on, and wood and grass were stored.

There were two focal points in each village, reproduced on a minor scale in the hamlets round each kraal. One was the 'big house' or the head of the kraal, where the leading [illegible]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

after the age of four or five, when they might become aware that intercourse was taking place. From this age, when the Ngoni said 'they will now begin to see things and to ask questions', they went to sleep either with a widowed grandmother or senior boys.

During the 'dark fortnight' and in the rains, most people went to bed very early after dark and little children got a long sleep. When the moon was bright, and in dry weather, the whole village was active, walking around, dancing, talking, visiting. Little children tagged round with their older sisters or nurse girls, and if they were sleepy were either picked up and carried, or put in the hut to sleep on their mat, provided there was a fire burning into which they could fall. During the day, especially in the hot weather, children dropped off to sleep just where they were, on the verandah, under the platform, or in some other shady spot.

It was just before bedtime, in the grandmother's hut, that traditional folk-tales were told, round the last flickers of a wood fire. Sometimes a child dropped off to sleep before the story was finished. Its mother either took him on her lap, or dumped him on his mat and covered him up.

This acquiring of habits, directed consciously by adults, was designed to give a child increasingly a sense of being part of a community which had certain standards of behaviour. There were in this training, some prohibitions which a child was required to observe as soon as he could walk and talk. The most stringent was on any form of sex play between boys and girls. To avoid any likelihood of this, little boys and girls were early encouraged to form separate play groups. The older boys kept an eye particularly on the boys, and if they showed by inquisitiveness in their play about the private parts of girl playmates, they were beaten and reproved and told: 'If you do this again, I shall tell your father.'

Many little boys and girls up to the age of four or five ran about naked, but in ruling Ngoni families they wore a scrap

CHILDREN OF THEIR FATHERS

805	8 *Ukhalo amankyane*	Hawks fly and hover
	9 *Ukhalo amakhala*	Hawks catch chickens
	10 *Isigangano esinkyane*	Trees begin to flower
	11 *Isigangano esikhala*	Trees fruiting
	12 *Isikhachana*	Trees fruiting
	13 *Umguno*	Trees fruiting

[152] The months were more generally grouped in two main seasons: the rains, whose name meant that the earth was "clothed and decorated with new grass, leaves and flowers"; and the dry season, the time for moving village sites, felling trees and clearing bush for new gardens, cutting cane. It was the true Ngoni families who knew the names for the months and the relation of months to the seasons. Among these families in every Ngoni village there were men who watched the sun's movements, and noted the hill or tall tree behind which the sun set when it reached its most southerly point. This was for them one of the signals that the rains were near. If the rains did not begin when the sun reached this point, they announced that this year the rains were delayed and the crops would probably suffer. When the *inkuku* bird [825] began to sing, the first man who heard it went to tell his neighbours to repair their hoe handles and begin to clear the fields, for the rains and the planting season was at hand. [824] When a large flat mushroom appeared in the woodland, it too was the herald of rain.

805 Not only were these months and the seasons they indicated the season of regulating work. They were also the way by 211 which the Ngoni reckoned time. They had *ezibi* for each month and *nyenkes* for the days. They took these with them on campaigns, and when returning they produced the *ezibi*, and pointing to the *nyenkes* they said: "On the sixth day of the seventh month we began fighting against X's village," or "We reached that river on the first day of the fifth month." 211 Ngoni elders were however quick to point out that they were all trained from childhood up to know excellent memories,

to plant a small number of trees (four per hut is the general rule). Seeds, seedlings and cuttings of mango, mulberry, lemon, guava, pawpaw and banana are distributed free from Departmental and Native Authority nurseries. The trees are planted within or about the sites of the new villages and the people are on the whole willing enough to plant them but show little inclination to care for them once they have been planted. Losses from drought and damage from fowls and small stocks are fairly heavy and in the Western Province two severe winters in succession have frosted off a number of young plantations. It is still uncertain whether this attempt to establish village orchards will be successful.

The only other general restrictions on land use are the prohibition of cultivation within demarcated areas and of late burning of grass and bush. In all village blocks non-cultivation areas have been demarcated for the preservation of streamsides and steep slopes. Areas have also been demarcated as Forest Reserves for future timber supplies and for the protection of watersheds, and in some open land which is not required for present use has been reserved against the future needs of a growing population. Late burning of grass and bush is prohibited and the responsibility for early burning of the village blocks is placed upon the headmen concerned. These prohibitions are enforced by Native Authority Rules.

§ 8. *Housing*

In most of the resettlement areas an attempt has been made to improve the standard of housing and the layout of villages and on the whole this has been fairly successful. When the permanent site has been selected (sometimes a lengthy business involving consultation with the ancestral spirits) the lay-out of the village is planned and the situation of each building marked out by an African Assistant. The people are persuaded to adopt a somewhat higher standard of building, but no compulsion is used and they have generally been willing enough to do so if the standard expected is not too high. The standard of housing and village lay-out is certainly an improvement, if not a very great one, on the standard within the Reserves.

In the Western Province a number of model villages have been built at Kimberley brick. These were built by the villagers themselves, with the assistance of a small team of skilled builders and thatchers employed by the Administration. The object was to stimulate a desire for better housing and it seems to have done so in some degree since most of the other villages have now volunteered to become 'models'.

§ 9. *Animal Movements*

The movement of a village for a comparatively short distance, a day's journey of fifteen miles or so, does not present any particular difficulty and the African has long been used to such movements. If it is impossible

T: Hodgson G-S (1926) 1933 FRS Nyasa FRS Malawi FR4

plain is a moderately inexpensive, undulating plateau, standing from 3,000 to 4,000 feet above sea-level and broken by ranges of mountains whose peaks towar several thousand feet higher.

The Dowa District is situated in the centre of the Protectorate. Its area of 3,400 square miles is divided topographically into three nearly equal parts, the alluvial lake-shore plain on the west giving way to the escarpment of the hilly plateau in the centre, which again drops steeply on the east to another plain extending to the banks of the Rua River. Each plain is well covered with light timber and long grass, and contains a plentiful supply of all local varieties of game. Natives have long inhabited the lake shore; on the west, migrating from Rhodesia, they crossed the Rua as recently as 1914 and have now spread as far as the hills. The central plateau is cool and healthy. Formerly well timbered, it has since been denuded by the wasteful methods of the native inhabitants. It is free from tsetse and ecmophlebus, and cattle thrive in consequence. The larger species of game are absent.

2. *Sociological Introduction.*

The census of 1926, taken at the time when these notes were compiled, shows the population of the District as consisting of 97,284 *Ankoma*,[1] 68,548 *Angoni*, 66 *Anyanja* and 4,867 *Wayao*, together with an odd thousand belonging to other tribes. The *Ankoma* live principally in the west and centre, the *Angoni* on the central plateau, and the *Anyanja* and *Wayao* on the lake shore. The same census gives a total of 847,000 *Angoni* and 470,000 *Anyanja* and *Ankoma* out of 1,800,000 natives then settled in the Protectorate.

The two last-named tribal pairs together are numerically the largest in Nyasaland, and they have probably lived in their present habitat longer than any others; but the exact location of their ancestors can only be a matter for conjecture, since the history of the southern Bantu peoples, during the last few centuries at any rate, consists of one long series of migrations and invasions. From time to time chiefs and tribes have risen, united under a strong and powerful leader, and a few decades later disintegrated, but not in such a way that they have always vanished. New names have frequently been adopted, and few tribes to-day can trace the main line of their progression and occupy the same ground as did their ancestors two hundred years ago. This condition is supplemented but audibly by the reports of the early Portuguese explorers, who first ascended the Zambesi River at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Their reports were commercial rather than scientific, and they have left little record of the native peoples with whom they came in contact.

It is known, however, that the *Ankoma* and *Anyanja* are off-shoots or descendants of the *Achewa*, who inhabited the country north of the Shiré River at first and Tete in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his Report upon the Rivers of Central Africa compiled in 1867 Dr. Richard Thornton states that this country was governed by the emperor, named Caronga, whose kingdom extended two hundred leagues up the river from the port of

[1] *Ankoma* known to Cewa-speaking people who speak proper as *A-ngoni*, *A-koma*, sometimes *Wa-ngoni*. The singular prefix is *Mu-*, as *Mungoni*, *Mumu*. Further south, also, they and those are more commonly *Ama-Ngoni*, *Ama-Nkosi*, *Ama-Ndebele*. For the sake of convenience, when there is no danger of confusion between prefix and stem, I have omitted the hyphen.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FRS Ngoni FRS
Mpezeni

The present-day population of the tribe is about 63,000, of whom about 60,000 live in Northern Rhodesia and 2,500 in the Fort Manning area of Nyasaland.[1] In Northern Rhodesia the tribe is largely confined to two demarcated Native Reserves. In 1938 the density of population in these two reserves averaged 18 persons to the square mile;[2] but in some congested or very fertile areas it was 50 or more.[3] Since 1941 the density has been reduced in some of the more congested parts by controlled resettlement in areas outside the reserves.[4] The density of population of the Nyasaland section of the tribe was about 28 persons to the square mile in 1945.[5]

The region in which the Ngoni live consists of a fairly flat plateau about 3,500 feet above sea-level, with massive granite outcrops rising another 1,000 feet or more. The soils of the region are principally of the types suitable only for shifting or partial cultivation, but there are also belts of more valuable soils.[6] In relation to the customary mode of agriculture, in which maize is the principal crop, the critical density of the land has been calculated to be about 20 persons to the square mile.[7] The annual rainfall at Fort Jameson varies from 27 to 48 inches, averaging about 35 inches. The region contains the meeting of the Lunsemfwa-Mpika and Lunsemfwa-Kasanka watersheds. Most of the streams that flow down into the Lunsemfwa dry up in July, while the Kasanka and Mpika streams continue to flow somewhat longer.[8]

The natural vegetation of the region consists principally of *Brachystegia-Isoberlinia* woodlands, with larger trees along the lines of streams. The mean maximum temperature for the region is about

of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. This account was prepared at Oxford, and I am very grateful to Dr. Max Gluckman for criticisms of this paper in draft.

[1] In the 1951 Nyasaland census many of the people living in the two Ngoni areas (the two chiefdoms in Cross Nzoia the figure of 2,555 Ngoni in Fort Manning does not represent the total population of these two counties. Cf. *Report on the Census*, Table 5.

[2] Calculated from the figure given in the *Plan Report*, p. 364. These two reserves contain Cross chiefdoms as well as Ngoni, but the average population density of the two tribes is probably of the same order.

[3] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, p. 10.

[4] Evans, *Land Resettlement*, pp. 17-19.

[5] *Report on the Census*, Table 6. The Fort Manning District contains a Cross chiefdom as well as the two Ngoni. The figure given above is the average for the whole district.

[6] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, p. 10.

[7] Allan, *African Land Usage*, p. 15.

[8] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, pp. 1 and 2.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FRS Ngoni FRS
Mpezeni

192. 64° F. and the mean minimum 61·5° F.[1] These seasons are distinguished: the wet season, from the beginning of November until about April; the cold season, from May until July; and the hot season, from August until the rains begin again. Most of the planting takes place in the first half of the wet season, and the harvest comes after the rains have ceased. There is very little fishing, but antelopes, leopards, wild pig, and buck are hunted for their meat, and lions, leopards, hyenas, and monkeys on account of the damage they do to crops and livestock. The greater part of the region is free enough from tsetse fly to permit cattle-keeping, and for the tribe as a whole there is approximately one head of cattle to every two people. Pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens are also kept.

The material culture of the tribe is similar to that of their neighbours. They live in one- or two-roomed huts of bamboo or pole and mud; some women make pottery and some men make mud mats; all buy their clothes and their beer from the shops.[2]

Three languages are used in the region: Ci-Ngoni, a language akin to Zulu, is now heard only in songs and royal praises; Ci-Nyanja is taught in the schools and is used for communication with Europeans and Indians; while the normal language used every day in the villages is a dialect of Ci-Tonga.

I. THE STATE

Old Administrative System

The Ngoni think of themselves as different from their neighbours because of their distinctiveness. The other tribes do not, in the eyes of the Ngoni, possess the same kind of pyramidal and centralized organization which was characteristic of the régime of Mpezeni I and which persists in a modified form at the present time.

The important positions in the old political structure were occupied by members of the royal lineage, their queens, the regional governors,[3] and the headmen.[4] The political system was at the same time the territorial system, residence being determined by political allegiance. The pattern of residence and allegiance persisted despite the movement of the tribe as a whole from one region to another and despite

[1] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, pp. 1-3.
[2] See my *Material Culture of the Port Jameson Ngoni*.
[3] Mukanzamina, *pl. cit.*, *passim*. [4] Nkowa, *pl. cit.*, *passim*.